

Troubleshooting

Troubleshooting

Every group has its ups and downs and often brings unexpected surprises. The group may have people who tend to dominate the discussion, as well as those who are quiet but have much to contribute. This section is intended to help you with some of the most frequently encountered situations in leading a group discussion.

We don't have a conference room in which to meet.

You don't need one. Someone's living room, a local school classroom, or anywhere that people can sit and feel comfortable expressing their feelings will work. If you plan to show the film before a discussion, you will need a TV monitor and a DVD player, but you may also ask people to watch the film at home before the session if it is airing on a local public television station or if you can lend out the DVD of the film.

Someone in the group has burst into tears! What do I do?

This is a good sign. Those tears needed to come out. The rest of the group may be even more uncomfortable with tears than you are, so it helps to say something like, "Tears are important. We are dealing with a lot of big emotional issues. We are all among friends here, so don't be afraid to cry here. Crying is part of the healing process that lets you go on."

People take cell phone calls, and they interrupt the discussion.

At the beginning of the session ask everyone to turn off his or her cell phone or switch the phone to vibration mode with the ringer off. If people must take calls during the session, tell them that you must ask them to take the calls outside of the room, out of earshot.

People bring their children, and the noise of the children playing is disruptive.

Prepare ahead of time for this possibility. Even if you have told people not to bring children, it happens sometimes. Figure out what options you have for keeping the children busy and away from the group. If possible, arrange to have a VCR player or a DVD player and a TV monitor in another room playing a children's video, or arrange for a babysitter to come during the session to keep the children from interrupting your session. Older children or teenagers could be invited to participate in the session. If the group meets regularly, ask the group how they want to deal with the situation. One possibility is to develop a rotating schedule that arranges for one person each session to stay with the children or to bring someone to stay with the children during the session. If you meet at a nearby school, the children may be able to play under supervision on the school playground.

People expect food at sessions like this, or they bring food that's not healthful.

Food helps people to feel more relaxed, and you do want a comfortable setting in which people can open up. If this is a single session, provide water or sugarless

drinks, fruit, perhaps vegetables and low-fat dip, or low-fat crackers and cheese. Pretzels are a lower fat choice than chips, but they are still high in salt and not the best choice for people with high blood pressure. If you are meeting regularly, discuss this food issue with the group at the first session and ask that only low-fat, low-sugar, healthful snacks are brought.

One person is doing all the talking.

There are a couple of ways to deal with this situation. Sometimes the person who is talking a lot is bringing out good points, and you don't want him or her to stop, but you do want to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak. In that case, every once in a while, explain that you would like to go around the room and ask each person if he or she has anything to say on the topic being discussed. Or you can tell the group that you would like them to adopt some "ground rules" for the discussion. These ground rules would include the provisions that only one person speaks at a time, that there is to be no interrupting, that all opinions are welcome, that there are no right or wrong opinions, and any other provisions that the group deems appropriate. For example, one rule might be that one person may speak for only 2 minutes at a time. Two minutes should give plenty of time for relating an opinion, and even enough time for most personal stories. The "two minute rule" helps to ensure that everyone will have enough time to speak and that one person does not monopolize the discussion.

If some participants continue to break the ground rules, remind the group of these rules. If a person continues to disrupt the class and can't seem to understand that the ground rules apply to him or her, call a break in the session and then speak to the person individually during the break. Two choices for your conversation with this person are:

1. If the person is difficult and disruptive, ask him or her to keep comments brief because others in the group want to speak. Consider establishing the "two minute rule" if you have not already done so. Tell the disruptive person that if he or she cannot follow this rule, you will have no choice but to ask him or her to leave.
2. If you think that the person has goodwill but is having trouble with control, ask him or her to help with the class. You can enlist the person's help with taking notes on the flipchart, distributing handouts, or other duties. Use the person's energy and goodwill to help you.

The DVD player isn't working, and we can't replay the scene.

Try asking for a few volunteers to role-play the scene. It doesn't matter if they don't get it exactly right. Their role playing will show how they remember the emotions of

the scene, and that's the point that we are trying to get at here. This situation might even give you a chance to have volunteers role-play the same scene in a few different ways. Ask the volunteers to role-play different emotions and different ways of helping Calvin.

People are arguing and getting upset when they disagree.

Remind folks that we are dealing with emotions here. There is no right or wrong concerning how someone feels—it just is the way that he or she feels. The point of this discussion is to bring out the many different kinds of emotions that people experience, to talk about how those emotions can help or hurt them, and to explore how to turn emotionally charged events into positive actions. Ask the group: “Can we turn all the powerful energy we are feeling during this discussion into something positive?”

Someone has asked a question about her personal health—for example, whether she should worry about the chest pain she gets sometimes when she is upset. What should I do?

Questions about personal symptoms must be directed back to the person's health care provider. Don't fall into the trap of trying to give medical advice. That is not your purpose in these sessions.

A lot of medical questions are coming up, and I don't know the answers, or I think I do but I'm not sure. Should I guess?

No. *Don't guess.* Don't give information unless you are absolutely sure of the answer. Tell the group that you don't know but will find out for them. You are strongly encouraged to invite a local health care provider or certified diabetes educator, or someone from the local American Diabetes Association (ADA) chapter, to a session. The focus of the modules in this discussion guide is on emotions and behavior—particularly what stops people from doing the right things to take care of themselves. But you don't want to leave medical questions up in the air. You may be able to find the answers on the Web sites of the National Diabetes Education Program, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or the National Institutes of Health, or from other Web sites listed in the References and Resource section at the back of this guidebook. See the following question.

We want more information. Where can we get it?

You can visit the many Web sites listed in the References and Resource section at the end of this guidebook. You can also call your local American Diabetes Association (ADA) chapter, or call the public inquiries line at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at 1-877-CDC-DIAB or the National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) at 1-800-438-5383 to order informational materials.

We want to give you some comments. How can we do this?

Do you have comments to make about this discussion guide? We'd love to have your opinions so that we can improve these materials in future revisions. Please either e-mail your comments to jkelly@cdc.gov or send them by regular mail to:

Dr. Jane Kelly
Director, National Diabetes Education Program
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Division of Diabetes Translation
Mailstop K-10
4770 Buford Highway
Atlanta, GA 30341